

Frequently Asked Questions about Living Quarters Allowance (LQA), Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance (TQSA), and Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA)

1. Q: What is a Living Quarters Allowance (LQA)?

A: Generally, LQA is intended to be a recruitment incentive for U.S. citizen civilian employees, living in the United States, to accept Federal employment in a foreign area. LQA covers substantially all annual costs for suitable, adequate living quarters for employee and family while living in the overseas area. However, LQA is not an entitlement or automatic salary supplement.

2. Q: What are the governing regulations for grant of LQA?

A: LQA is governed by (<http://www.state.gov/m/a/als/c1843.htm>); Department of Defense (DoD) Manual 1400.25-M, Department of Defense Civilian Personnel Manual, Subchapter 1250, Overseas Allowances and Differentials (<http://www.cpmc.osd.mil/cpm/cpm.html>); and Army in Europe Regulation (AER) 690-500.592, Civilian Personnel Living Quarters Allowance (<https://www.aeaim.hqusareur.army.mil/library/reg/pdf/aer690-500.592.pdf>).

3. Q: Who does AER 690-500.592 apply to?

A: AER 690-500.592 applies to civilian employees who are serviced by USAREUR civilian personnel advisory centers (CPACs) and paid by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), unless excluded under the terms of a civilian personnel servicing agreement. This regulation does not apply to non-appropriated fund (NAF) employees and employees in the Senior Executive Service.

4. Q: What are LQA rates based on?

A: LQA rates are established by Department of State and based on duty location, grade level, and number of family members.

5. Q: Where can I find the LQA rates for my official duty location?

A: LQA rates for different duty locations within the Army in Europe area of responsibility may be found in Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR), section 920 which can be accessed through the Civilian Human Resource Management Agency (CHRMA) homepage, Reference Library (<http://www.chrma.hqusareur.army.mil/>).

6. Q: Who is eligible for LQA under AER 690-500.592?

A: Three categories of employees may be eligible for grant of LQA:

Category 1: U.S. Hires/Local Hires in grades GS-09 (or equiv)/ WG-11/ WL-09/ WS-05 and above. This includes U.S./local hires selected for entry-level positions with target grades GS-09 and above. These grade restrictions do not apply to applicants selected for career program positions below the GS-09 (or equiv) level.

Additionally, local hires, immediately prior to appointment, must have been recruited in the U. S. by the U.S. Government, including its Armed Forces; a U.S. firm, organization, or interest; etc., under conditions that provided for the employee's return transportation to the U.S.

Category 2: Civilian employees (APF or NAF) selected for positions in grades GS-09 (or equiv)/ WG-11/ WL-09/ WS-05 and above, transferring to the European region from another overseas government activity or agency, without a break in service. These employees must be already in receipt of, or eligible to receive, LQA at the time of selection. They also must meet basic eligibility criteria of the DSSR. Grade restrictions do not apply to Federal civilian employees transferring to positions identified as hard-to-fill. Grade restrictions also do not apply to incumbents of career program positions below the GS-09 (or equiv) level.

Category 3: Employees selected for identified hard-to-fill positions when they are (1) local hires in grades GS-08 (or equiv)/ WG-10/ WL-08/ WS-04 or below; or (2) U.S. hires for identified hard-to-fill-positions at any grade who do not meet the 1-year residency requirement.

7. Q: What is a U.S. Hire for LQA purposes?

A: A U.S. hire is permanently residing in the U.S. from the time of application until and including the date of acceptance of formal job offer. The residence must have been at least 1 year immediately prior to acceptance of formal job offer. Employees on a mandatory mobility agreement are exempt from the 1-year residency requirement.

8. Q: What is a local hire for LQA purposes?

A: A local hire is physically residing in the country in which the position is located, or in any other country outside the U.S. This includes, but is not limited to, locally separated military personnel and employees of U.S. firms (contractors) or organizations.

9. Q: What are hard-to-fill positions?

A: Hard-to-fill positions are positions validated and approved by appropriate HR personnel in coordination with organizational leadership. They require unique skills, knowledge, or abilities and a documented 3-month recruitment history showing difficulties in finding qualified candidates within a broad area of consideration. Similar positions in similar locations are used to evaluate newly created positions or positions without current recruitment record.

10: Q: When is LQA terminated?

A: LQA will be terminated either:

- a. The day before temporary quarters subsistence allowance (TQSA) begins, unless a 5-day overlap is authorized for cleaning or renovation purposes; or
- b. The date an employee begins travel under transfer orders, or the effective date of the transfer when no travel is involved, whichever occurs first; or
- c. The effective date of the employee's separation; or
- d. The effective date the employee occupies government quarters; or
- e. The date the employee stops paying for quarters.

11: Q: What is a Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance (TQSA)?

A: TQSA is authorized for employees eligible for LQA who receive PCS orders. It may be approved for up to 90 days after arrival in the overseas area or new permanent duty station, and up to 30 days immediately before final departure from the post of assignment. TQSA is a percentage of the per diem rate applicable to the post of assignment, or actual cost, whichever is less. The per diem rates and percentage payable are established by the DSSR. TQSA reimburses the cost of lodging, meals, and incidental expenses. LQA reimburses only the cost of lodging.

12: Q: Who is authorizing TQSA?

A: CPAC Personnel Officers authorize TQSA for up to 90 days after the employee's date of arrival (or up to 30 days before the employee departs). TQSA will normally be terminated after 90 days. On the 91st day, LQA will replace TQSA at the rate applicable to the post of assignment until permanent quarters are secured. Exception: CPAC Personnel Officers authorize continuation of TQSA for up to an additional 60 days for compelling reasons beyond the employee's control.

13: Q: What is a Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA)?

A: There are two types of SMA:

1. Involuntary SMA, if an employee is compelled to maintain family members elsewhere than at the post of assignment because of adverse, dangerous, or notably unhealthy conditions; or
2. Voluntary SMA is based on a unique situation in which the government or circumstances clearly beyond the employee's control leave the employee no choice but to separate from members of the household. AER 690-500.592 only authorizes voluntary SMA in two situations:
 - a. For short-term transitional situations based on school attendance of children at the time of the employee's transfer. These requests may be approved for the

completion of the semester. If the child is a high-school senior, SMA will be approved for the entire school year. Children must be under the age of 18 or incapable of self-support, unless they are attending secondary school; or

b. Based on medical conditions of a family member for longer periods (complete medical documentation is required)